

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

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VOL. 5 NO. 3 AUG. 1944 PUBLISHED BY FILM CENTRE, 34 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON W.1

ONE SHILLING

A NATIONAL NEED

It appears more than probable that the Ministry of Information is due for abolition as soon as the fighting is over; indeed, Brendan Bracken himself is apparently in favour of this action. The M.O.I. is, of course, a war baby (of Gargantuan size), and many reasonable arguments can be advanced for its removal when the crisis is over. It is undoubtedly far too big; and some of its branches (notably that of censorship) have no place in the post-war period. But on the other hand it is providing in wartime a number of services whose value to the nation in peacetime would be of the most positive nature, and many people are beginning to fear that and only these too may be jettisoned, on grounds of "economy", if the M.O.I. itself vanishes and leaves them homeless.

This fear is all the more understandable if we consider how difficult it still is for the M.O.I. to get rid of the smell which surrounded its disastrous inception during 1939 to 1940. A glance through the back files of D.N.L. will suffice to indicate the lamentable mistakes (if indeed they were no more than mistakes) which brought it into disrepute. But the same glance will also show, quite clearly, the progress which has since been made. D.N.L. has never hesitated at any time to criticise the M.O.I. when criticism seemed necessary; and we believe much of our criticism has been useful and constructive. But one thing is clear. To begin with, criticism could only be directed at the M.O.I.'s failure to do anything at all. Later, criticism fell on its doing things the wrong way. But finally and recently, the criticisms have been aimed only at what seemed to be errors or mishandlings of schemes and plans which are essentially good and practical. The M.O.I. today is no more and no less open to criticism than any other Government department, and it will be well to remember this point during the next seven or eight months.

We make no plea for the retention of the M.O.I. as it now stands and in its present unwieldy size. What is essential, however, is that certain of its services—films, publications and home intelligence to name three of them—should not only be retained but carefully fostered and developed during the years following the war.

As far as films are concerned, the M.O.I. has provided the nation with one of the finest pieces of educational apparatus imaginable. The Central Film Library and the 150 odd non-theatrical circuits have become an important factor in our national life. The films shown in this way to over 20 million people a year are giving information and instruction, arousing new interests, stimulating discussion and in general acting as a creative factor in helping to produce those close relationships between the people and their government which are the essentials of democracy. It is, incidentally,

a great pity that the Films Division's non-theatrical work has not been publicised in more detail and more widely than hitherto, and we hope shortly to publish a full estimate of its value to various groups of the community. Meanwhile we content ourselves by asking (quite apart from informational matters) whether there is any department in any other government which has vigorously and widely circulated such forthright films as *World of Plenty*, *Words and Actions*, and *The Harvest Shall Come* to a vast audience cross-sectioning the whole of the community.

In addition to its non-theatrical service, the M.O.I. Films Division has done much for British feature film prestige, both here and overseas, through the full-scale documentaries of the Crown Film Unit (the influence of whose work on studio production is already marked). It has also, though perhaps more slowly, built up a good circulation of good films (British Council please note) in overseas countries, including the Dominions and Colonies, but most notably in the U.S.A. It has, too, effected a close and useful liaison with Russia, the fruits of which are now maturing. Remember too that the Films Division acts as the film making and distributing agency for all Government departments (other than the Services) and that this principle of operation makes for full co-ordination and avoids muddle and overlap.

It is essential that the National Film Service established by the M.O.I. shall be retained and further developed. And as films in this reference can no longer be regarded separately from other media, it is clear that these further developments must be in close relationship to publications, home intelligence, etc. The issuing of handbooks, pamphlets, posters, diagrams, wall newspapers and so on should be intimately tied in with non-theatrical film release. The relationship between films and exhibitions (both the permanent and, more importantly, the travelling type) needs no proof at this late stage.

By the same token there is a strong case for the retention of the Crown Film Unit and the necessary studio facilities which it entails. The time is long past when the old cries of bureaucracy or totalitarianism could be raised against the principle of a Government film unit and studios. Government is now in the film business; both past records and future possibilities make it sensible, to say the least, for it to stay there.

This need is nowhere more strongly indicated than in the field of education. The use of films, both for child and adult education, is now being closely considered by the Board of Education—and the considerations are not as to whether to use films, but as to how they can (continued overleaf)

We Need National Information Board

(continued)

best be used. The vast field of film education is not one which the nation can afford to leave to the vagaries and uncertainties of commercial exploitation, misdirected effort, and private profit. The say must be with the people through their Government.

It is time for all those who believe in the film as a social force to realise that there is a grave danger of all the work and progress so far achieved receiving, at best, a severe setback and, at worst, a mortal blow, if combined operations are not put in hand to ensure that the services of public information we have acquired during the past five years shall be retained.

It is not necessarily (or even sensibly) a matter of retaining the present somewhat unwieldy M.O.I.; it is a matter of seeing that the vital services now within the M.O.I. are not cancelled, or split up, or scattered to the four winds by being parcelled out to various Government departments.

Not for the first time in these columns we stress the need for a National Information Board—a creative body representative of all branches of information, education and public morale. It would in effect consist of the M.O.I. services outside the accretions of censorship and other wartime clobber. It would deal in terms of films, radio, television, posters, printed and illustrated matter, exhibitions, discussion groups and brains trusts, wall-newspapers, and any other media which enable the people of a democracy not merely to draw closer to each other for free discussion and for co-operative action arising from discussion, but also to present a true picture of themselves and their aspirations to the rest of the world.

The Overseas Aspect

Not least important is the overseas aspect, and particularly so in relation to the Commonwealth. In the Dominions for instance the nuclei of such information services exist; and in Canada these services have, partly on experience gained by workers in England during the 'thirties, been developed to an extent fully equalling and in some respects surpassing our own. Moreover, the value of such an Information Board in relation to international bodies would be enormous. Already we have the I.L.O. in action again; we have the urgencies represented by UNRRA, which may prove the first form of a permanent world secretariat of supply; we have UNIO; and so on. If we in Britain are to play our part in these world wide activities an Information Board such as we suggest is essential. Without it, we should be left to the tender mercies of the Foreign Office and the British Council.

It is perhaps too early to lay down the exact constitutional form in which we should co-ordinate our educational and informational services. The Information Board we propose could be set up in various different ways. But whatever constitution is chosen, there are certain factors which must be regarded as *sine qua non*. The first of these is the maximum possible freedom from the trammels of routine civil service administration. The second is that the proposed organisation should not be an appendage of any existing Government department (not even the Board of Education). The third is that the public interest should be freely and fully represented on the board, and that the board should be answerable for its actions in parliament through a Cabinet Minister who would be a member of it. And finally, the functions envisaged must not be sidetracked into mere co-ordination of effort (important though this would be), but must be initiatory and creative.

The essential thing, here and now, is to see that our information services do not go by default in the post-war period. We urge all people of goodwill to see, through proper machinery of democracy, that the nation retains and gets what it needs.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

The Purchase of E.R.P.I.

AN EVENT of major importance which has recently taken place in the United States has received surprisingly little publicity in this country. We refer to the purchase of E.R.P.I. (Electrical Research Products Inc.) Film Library by Encyclopaedia Britannica. A subsidiary of the West Electric Co., it was one of the largest and most important producers of classroom films (and some others of a direct educational nature) anywhere in the world. The terms under which it has changed hands are therefore very important. This is the situation, roughly speaking. The Encyclopaedia Britannica belongs to the University of Chicago, one of the more notable and important universities of the North American continent. Superficially, therefore, E.R.P.I. is passing into suitable academic hands. What has now happened, however, is that E.R.P.I. has become "Encyclopaedia Britannica Films Inc". The Chairman of the Board of this new body is the Vice-President of Chicago University and the Board itself includes the President of Chicago University and two United States Government officials (the O.P.A. administrator and the Under Secretary of Commerce). Amongst the others we find the President of Dartmouth College, the president of Encyclopaedia Britannica, the president of the Book of the Month Club, the chairman of the Quaker Company, a representative of the noted publishers Simon & Schuster, and the president of the Studebaker Company. To this list must be added Mr. Marshall Field, who is probably one of the richest men in the world and an important newspaper publisher, and Mr. Henry Luce, of *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune*. It will be noted that Mr. Luce's organisation also controls the film series *March of Time*. It is now said that the Eastman Kodak educational library is also being acquired by this group. The general picture, therefore, is of a great centralisation of visual media of education, which is not necessarily a bad thing. The presence of names such as those of Luce and Marshall Field, with their remarkable control of important printed periodicals, suggests that a move may be in progress by what we may describe as the right wing progressives for a considerable control over a major educational field. On the Board also are some prominent industrialists whose presence reminds us of the conception of America as a great trading country and of such phrases as "The American Century"; nevertheless it would be going much too far to suggest that this new move in the visual educational field is in any way consciously devoted to "selling America", or to any other forms of similar propaganda. All those concerned in the future of documentary film, particularly on an international basis, will be interested in the future development of this big new project which represents on the one hand the academic attitude and on the other hand those wider fields of public education and information which are linked with popular media such as the press, radio, film and so on. In this connection we note that Mr. Luce recently bought a block of shares in the Blue Network, one of the major American radio companies. Nor would it surprise us to learn in the not too distant future that some arrangement had been come to with Walt Disney Films to include their educational work in the whole set-up of which Encyclopaedia Britannica Films Inc. is the corner-stone. Meantime, we note with interest and satisfaction that John Grierson has now joined the Board of Encyclopaedia Britannica Films Inc.

A Good Laugh

Without in any way wishing to detract from a film which we have not yet seen and, for all we know, may be extremely good, we quote below the opening of a two-and-a-half page publicity hand-out circulated by Two Cities Films Ltd. Here it is:

"Much has been said and written about the possibilities of the Documentary film, a vast source of entertainment and instruction as yet barely tapped. True, the war has given us several outstanding Documentaries, conceived and made by experienced directors and

(continued on page 38)

THE GRIERSON AND THE I.L.O.

John Grierson has reported how an American journalist, Miss Ernestine Evans, first suggested to him a pre-war plan for the enlightened use of the film medium by the International Labour Office. Her thesis was as follows. If England represents the highest standard of safety in mines, let an appropriate film record be made for all the mining nations to see and let it pass out to the world through the agency of the I.L.O. If Sweden has the best system of hospital service, or New Zealand the highest standard of pre-natal care, or France the best service of medical information to farmers, let the record of them go out to all the other countries for their consideration and benefit. Use the I.L.O. as a world centre. Let it encourage the various countries to produce those film records which by their example would best contribute to the common cause.

Largely as a result of Miss Evans's suggestion, Grierson and Basil Wright, on the I.L.O.'s request worked out at Film Centre a scheme which they took to Geneva in 1938. But the sands of peace were running out and war came before anything concrete could materialise. In 1944 the opportunity presents itself once more. On April 26th of this year Grierson, now Canadian Government Film Commissioner, again stated his case, this time against a horizon of approaching peace. He had been invited to address the I.L.O. conference at Philadelphia and he reminded the assembled body that the I.L.O. and any similar international bodies which might grow from the war would be faced with an educational task which must be conceived in new terms. He began by stating them.

"The I.L.O. is concerned with working standards and working relationships and we have all been learning over the years how wide and deep this interest goes. The war period, especially, has provided a revelation of how the quantitative achievements of industry are completely dependent on the conditions under which industry is carried on, how war efforts of every kind involve close consideration of the social structure which supports them. The war period has, at least, brought a revelation of this relationship to the people concerned with war information and industrial morale.

"Not all of them, I am sorry to say, have appreciated the humanistic terms under which the work of men's hands is secured. In spite of the experience of the I.L.O. over the years, the worst mistakes were made from the beginning. First we had the 'patriotism is enough' period—the 'my country right or wrong' period. To integrate the workers' front with the soldiers' front, we thought it sufficient to call up the sacred images of the tribe and the nation. The flags flew, the bands blared. The lights of common sense were dimmed; spotlit, our national banners fluttered in an artificial freeze. Then we had the 'black and white' period. We built up the Nazis as the children of darkness and ourselves as the children of light. We asserted our way of life as the best in the best of all possible worlds. Forgetting the dark thirties, we assumed an affectionate and even fervent belief in the *status quo*. Then we had the 'finger of scorn' period when we bullied the workers from factory platforms, telling them how they were killing soldiers and sinking ships and letting down the war effort if they so much as cast a critical eye over wages and working conditions in time of war.

"We had to come sooner or later to a more realistic conception of our information to industry. We discovered that absenteeism might have a great deal to do with local transport conditions or local health conditions or local housing conditions. We discovered that the employment of women involved a consideration of crèches and communal kitchens, and even a consideration of the opening hours of beauty parlours. We discovered that there was a basis in reason—local reason—yes, even for the attitudes and actions of the people. With any true sense of democracy we should have known it from the beginning.

"That was not all. We discovered that the co-operation of the workers in any effort, national or otherwise, is dependent on the amenities which surround not only their lives inside the factory but their lives outside it. We discovered that the degree of their participation depends on the degree to which, as free men, they are allowed to participate in the understanding, direction and management of their own work and their own destiny. We discovered, finally, that all the patriotic ballyhoo, all the generalisations about black and white, all the exhortations, abuses and threats are not so important or so basic as a credible pledge, implemented in action, that the war is for the sake of the common people everywhere, and nothing if not that....

"The ends men seek are identical and simple and concrete, whether they come black, white or yellow. They concern food and health and housing and the other highly visible evidences of the good life. I have no doubt that when these are fought for and secured, the invisible aspects of the good life—whatever these may be—will come to inhabit the edifice we have built. In the meantime, it is in the fulfilment of actual and visible human needs that we shall find the basis of a common philosophy and, if I may say so, the only one which the peoples of the world will any longer trust. In this progressive struggle for welfare which is actual, we all need the example of other countries, the example of other peoples' genius, other peoples' ingenuity and other peoples' good fortune. This example of others is a weapon in our hands, wherever we may be, with which to intensify the educational effort in our own domain....

"There is an internationale of interest in medicine and town planning and agricultural research, and in each of the thousand and one specialised fields of human effort. From this point of view there is no such thing as a general public, nationally or internationally. There are thousands of publics, all trying to do something about something. The only time they all get together and become general is when they get tired of doing things, and lazy and lackadaisical and want to get off the earth. The trouble is that we have organised the people brilliantly in their moods of relaxation. We have organised them in the movies and the dope sheets of the sensational press and the dance halls of the nations. But we have not, with anything like the same intensity or deliberation, organised the people in their moods of resolution. We have not, with anything like the same adequacy, sufficiently fed them in the terms of their constructive and creative interests....

"The source of vital education to-day is no longer the formal educational system. It resides rather in functional international organisations like U.N.R.R.A. and the I.L.O., and in functional national organisations which are actively concerned in developing the welfare of the people. I doubt if the people any longer put their hope in formal education, and for the good reason that it is not associated with their actual needs. There are brave exceptions, I know; but, by and large, it has been so anxious to avoid political difficulty that it has steered education away from those needs which produce political expression and therefore produce political difficulty. It has come to teach the technique of understanding but not the substance of it. It gives technical skills but not the sense of a living and organic social participation."

Grierson promised that there was no one concerned with documentary films or with film education in the various countries in the world who would not willingly stir his country into participation in a great new international educational effort. We here in Britain reiterate the pledge on our own behalf, and we await the appearance of allies in official quarters.

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

The New Crop. Green Park Unit of Verity Films. *Direction:* Ken Annakin. *Camera:* Geoffrey Williams. *Associate Producer:* E. Anstey. M.O.I. 20 minutes. Non-T.

Subject: The afforestation of Britain.

Treatment: This film follows the usual line: trees—the demand for timber caused by the war—science stepping in—the future of timber in Britain. All very neat and nice. Beautifully photographed, slickly directed, nothing omitted, except perhaps clear thinking. Even the commentator seemed to get a little tired of his rigmarole towards the end of the second reel. Perhaps the formula is getting a little stale through over use, or perhaps to-day's audiences deserve something tougher. The conclusions drawn towards the end are just a little too Utopian for the amount of information given in the earlier part of the film. Soft-wood growing seems certainly to be a get-rich-quick procedure, but while covering vast tracks of Britain with pine and spruce may be a road to prosperity, it will surely bring with it fresh problems. Somehow the case is too glib, the solution too easy; one is almost forced to suspect a snag, rather as in those shiny American magazines whose advertisements promise you the millennium if you travel by a certain railroad. One knows that the iced water tap wouldn't always work and the panoramic windows be often obscured by plebeian dirt.

The case for State Control of forests is well put, but here again the film fails by taking the whole thing too smoothly and making it sound too easy. Whichever way you look at it there is something slightly sinister about a pine or spruce plantation and in a strange way this is reflected in this film. There is something wrong somewhere and without knowing more about the whole subject it is difficult to know what it is, but it is there just the same.

Propaganda Value: Good informational stuff, beautiful to look at, but as has been said above, a bit too easy for audiences, who can stand something less predigested.

Cotswold Club. Strand Films. *Direction:* Charles de Lautour. *Camera:* Cyril Arapoff. *Associate Producers:* E. Anstey and D. Taylor. M.O.I. Non-T. 12 mins.

Subject: The work of the Village Garden Produce Association.

Treatment: A retired bank official has gone to live in a village and he finds it difficult to get to know people. He tells his story in the first person, and as proof of the fact that he finds it difficult to mix with the villagers, we see a long shot of a church after the Sunday morning service, with all the congregation walking one way and he and his wife walking sadly away in the opposite direction among the tombstones.

He goes on to tell us that there was not enough food to feed one of the neighbour's pigs and how the schoolmistress wrote to the Ministry of Agriculture who sent down a fellow to organise a Garden Produce Association in the village. Thus the banker got to know everybody, the pig was fed, the villagers increased their production of vegetables and also learnt how to market them.

The deliberately naive approach to the subject somehow does not quite succeed in its purpose.

One never quite believes in the village and its people, although it is nicely shot and the people themselves come across quite well. Perhaps this is because the film has an air of playing down to its audience, and the subject is treated very much from the outside.

Propaganda Value: Should be useful for showing in villages that have not heard of this particular scheme of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Children of the City. Direction: Budge Cooper. Camera: V. Suschitsky. Production: Paul Rotha. M.O.I. for Scottish Education Department, Scottish Home Dept. 30 mins.

Subject: Child delinquency. In Scotland in this instance but, fundamentally, the problem this film states could be anywhere.

Treatment: In the spate of short films now being made, few are memorable. Perhaps through overuse of a formula, or lack of real, honest feeling on the part of a director, or through official wet blanketing, most do their job and are soon forgotten; some are not remembered long enough to be even forgotten.

Children of the City comes as a healthy shock, a reminder of the power of the documentary film. Absorbingly interesting, telling its story in terms of people, of real live people and not lay figures, it yet makes its points as clearly as though it had been made of diagrams. And when it is finished it leaves the mind not dazed or doped but working fast.

The film tells the story of Alec, Duncan and Robbie, three boys in Edinburgh who break into a pawnbroker's for a lark and find themselves taking money from the till when the police come in. An escapade has become a crime. (How Jean Vigo would have liked this sequence with the small boy in the old-fashioned picture hat posturing in front of the mirror!) The day arrives for their appearance before the Juvenile Court, and as they and their parents meet to go together to the Court, we see something of their backgrounds. Alec, the ringleader, from a slum room, with a father whose dark history of pre-war unemployment has demoralised the large family. Duncan, whose father is away at war, from the home where his mother struggles overhard to keep things nice. Robbie, who has a squint, from a good working-class home. These are the three boys, Alec, dark and lowering; Duncan, fair and defiant, and Robbie, the youngest, puzzled but undismayed. Their mothers typify their home lives; Alec's mother is feckless and worn out; Duncan's is nervy and bottled up, and Robbie's is matter-of-fact and unimaginative.

The Juvenile Court in Edinburgh, which seems a fairly sensibly run place, takes each case in relation to the child and his background of school and home. The verdicts are given. Robbie is aged ten. Perhaps his squint is at the bottom of his troubles. His case is to be held open while he attends a Child Guidance Clinic. Duncan, aged 13, who has a good intelligence record but a bad school attendance, is to be visited at regular intervals by the probation officer. Alec, aged 13½ is another matter; he has been in the Court before and is the ringleader of the younger ones. His home life gives him no help, so he is sent for a course of disciplining at an approved school. A baleful eye will be kept on all three of them for the next year or so. Perhaps it sounds a bit

grim in print but it comes to life all right on the screen and appears a reasonable *ad hoc* solution of the problem, under existing conditions.

We see Robbie at the Child Welfare Centre starting his treatment, we see the probation officer calling on a reluctant Duncan, and we see Alec busy at the approved school. That is the end of their story in so far as it concerns the film. The practical side of the matter has been looked after as well as possible. But these boys are one of three of a whole generation which often nears the borderline between play and crime, a state of affairs accentuated by the conditions of war. Now the camera, moving over overcrowded playgrounds, over gangs of children playing in mean streets, poses the real problem. Children get up to mischief because there is no proper outlet for the bursting, surging, creative energy within them. Schools are only open for a certain number of hours per day and a certain number of days per week. It is these free hours, playing a large and important part in a child's life, which make the problem.

The film suggests there ought to be places centres, organised activities of all kinds, scope for unorganised activities, too. (During the sequence the film takes a swift skate across the thin ice of fascism when it refers, pictorially, to the A.T.C. and other pre-Service organisations.) Thus we have a human problem related to a general one and a suggested and admittedly only partial solution. This is one of the strengths of the film. There is no easy thinking or finding of a glib solution. But our attention has been held by this story of Alec, Duncan, Robbie, and other minds have been made to work on the problems they represent. The film has done its job, the job more films should do and it has done it in a purely visual and cinematic way. The commentary is particularly well written and sincere and sensibly spoken. The director's handling of the people is excellent, and the cameraman has equalled her with the photography. They have made a film of which they can well be proud.

Propaganda Value: No one seeing this film can fail to be affected by it, and after seeing it, think.

Danger Area. Producer: Sydney Box. Director: Henry Cass. Scenario: Inez Holden. Camera: Raymond Elton. Production: Verity Film M.O.I. Non-T. Length: 20 mins.

Subject: A rush job in a munitions plant. An urgent Admiralty demand for a shell filled with a new type of explosive has to be met at short notice.

Treatment: The story is told largely in dramatic form, with dialogue. The basic idea is, of course, the race against time, with addition of the dangerous element arising from the handling of a new explosive of uncertain temperament. There is especially dramatic sequence concerning the dismantling of a fuse; this is shot with a nice sense of suspense and lighting. Throughout the film direction is sincere and straightforward, if sometimes a little raw. Perhaps not enough is made of the workers themselves, whose admirable actions could have taken more footage against that of the experts in charge. But in general the film does a good job in portraying the atmosphere of a munitions plant—the elaborate precautions, widely spaced buildings, and the deliberate slow unhurried movements of the personnel.

Propaganda Value: Good.
(continued overleaf)

Atlantic Trawler. *Producer:* John Taylor. *Director:* Frank Sainsbury. *Camera:* A. Jeakins, Eric Fowle, Cyril Phillips. *Production:* Realist Film Unit for M.O.I. Length 20 mins.

Subject: The life of Atlantic trawlers in wartime.

Treatment: The documentary movement was to a great degree nurtured on the fruits of the sea, sprung perhaps more notably than white fish. Somehow, there is a consistent line of fishing films from *Drifters*, through *Granton Trawler* and *North Sea* to the film here reviewed. It might well be expected that by this time there was little new that could be portrayed, and that we should seeing once again all the admirable shots of water, seagulls, and ships against the sky, plus probably intimate shots of the men themselves. Sainsbury has produced all this and done it well, but he has added new and valuable elements. In the first place he has stressed, with great effect, the strange change which has come over the depleted trawling industry in wartime—not merely the dangers but also that special atmosphere which relates to the fact that so many of the boats across the world are now on active service. Secondly he has given us, with sympathetic insight, the first true picture of the trawlers ashore; this sequence is one of the nicest jobs seen in a short documentary for some time, but we understand that it has now been removed by the M.O.I.

Propaganda Value: Good.

Welcome to Britain Strand Film Co. *Producer:* Arthur Elton. *Assoc. Producer:* Legh Clowes. *Director:* Anthony Asquith. *Camera:* Jo Jago. M.O.I. 1 hr.

From the earliest days of talkies, when addressed directly from the screen by Cabinet Ministers, celebrities and Experts, I have always slid down my chair, behind the head in front.

I was very suspicious and uneasy when Frank Haven came up to that fence in *Our Town* and spoke to me.

This is just a personal complex, reprehensible not actually contemptible. It is remarked only making the more remarkable my enjoyment.

Welcome to Britain. After the way it began, American troops disembarking and Brass hats lined up in front of a wall. At first glimpse, knew I was going to be Spoken To. The director didn't rush matters. About half a dozen shots before it happened. The suspense. . . . I had a mind to risk Court Martial by sneaking out.

When this talking was over, the "director" of the film, Burgess Meredith, was left with a firm, large sounding but vague command from the General. Perhaps his perplexity struck a chord of sympathy. Anyway, when he looked up and said that having been three weeks in England he was obviously the very man to tell us all about it, I began to relax and have a good time.

Later they threw in Bob Hope and Beatrice in a nice setting but, though Bob Hope was particularly spontaneous-sounding and funny, these two relevant sequences were hardly necessary. The haphazard, slightly worried and uncertain progress of Burgess Meredith was so diverting that it was sorry that, at the end of an hour, he was abruptly detailed for a Battle Course, leaving the film unfinished, with scarcely time to say goodbye.

If Burgess Meredith isn't the best actor on the screen, he is the best ever to have spoken directly from it to his audience. He just does what he likes and it seems OK. He beckons the camera close and whispers to us, he makes

silent comment and loud spoken comment, demonstrating what should and what should not be done; he even upsets one of the players who doesn't understand that his asides are addressed to us. He even tackles Brass Hats on our account so that they speak to him and we listen—strange as it seems he never becomes smug, smart or affected nor seems an actor in the Academy Award sense at all. He's too good for an Oscar.

The purpose of the film is to explain England and the English to newly arrived Americans. They may be reckoned more than normally resistant to appeals of any kind, but this one is so persuasive and clear, sympathetic and vigorous that anyone will surely like it, whatever his mood.

I wish the incredibly quaint schoolroom sequence had been less unreal, and it looks as though serious reference to unnecessary travel was cut out, which is a pity. However, there is plenty that is good.

If the public could see this they'd wonder why only American soldiers are so understandingly approached by the M.O.I. Surely the answer is not just Burgess Meredith?

Cambridge. Everyman Films. *Director:* Richard Massingham. *Camera:* Alex Strasser. British Council. Length 25 mins.

Subject: The University of Cambridge.

Treatment: The film covers most facts of University life. Colleges, lecture halls, games, spare time. The interiors are very well shot, and there is some extremely good quality sound in the sync. sequences. On the whole it is a pleasant enough film to look at, even occasionally visually exciting. But it has very little to say. One feels all the time that the commentator is talking for the sake of filling in gaps. Even the shots of Sir William Bragg and the Master of Trinity and others talking to students add little to the film, as they also seem to suffer from the general rush of platitudes. Perhaps if the commentary had been spoken in a more professional way it might not have appeared so dim or, on the other hand, perhaps the British Council had nothing to say about Cambridge.

Propaganda Value: In the phraseology of the film trade press: "Acceptable popular for good-class halls, with useful picture angle for foreign consumption."

Trailers. Various Units.

Treatment: Reviewing these trailers the day after seeing them, it is extremely difficult to remember what any of them were about. There was one about fuel saving and one about Income Tax and another about something else. Different techniques were used and the one done by cartoon was amusing. But surely the message of a trailer should last a little longer than this. One remembers the time when trailers were the brightest flowers in the rather thorny bouquet of the M.O.I. Films Division. This new group of trailers shows that times have changed and for the worse. A trailer's job must be to shock the seat-changing, chattering audience into attention, and at one level of consciousness or another, leave a message. None of this present group, although they are all competently made, could possibly hold anybody's attention. It would be interesting to know why the quality of the trailers has fallen and what has happened to all those bright ideas which, even if they sometimes annoyed the audience, at least compelled their attention and made people listen to the messages they had to give.

Minefield. Army Film Unit. M.O.I. 15 minutes. **Subject:** How a minefield is cleared.

Treatment: It is possible that one of the growing points of the documentary film is being carefully nurtured by the Service Film Units. Just as there is a growing and extremely important tendency to make highly specialised films aimed at a particular purpose and for very definite types of audience, so there is a trend towards presenting a documentary subject in as dramatic a form as possible for general cinema audiences. The recording of fact and the presenting of those facts in as dramatic a way as possible is the job the Service Units set out to do.

Minefield is a good example of this technique. An attack in North Africa is about to be launched and the Sappers have got to clear the mines for the tanks and infantry to go through. The men go out into the darkness to map the position of the minefields. Their almost animal-sensitive hands groping over the surface of the sand, searching for trip wire, booby-trap and mine. Slowly through the night, working in an atmosphere of perpetual suspense, flattening on the ground when the star shells go up, they complete their survey of the area. From the information they gain the men in charge of the operation choose the best points in the minefields through which to launch the attacks. Just before the attack is begun, the Sappers move forward, again in the dark, to clear the mines from the pathway which has been selected through the wire. Here is danger and suspense in full measure. The whispers through the night and the slow, Hoover-like, creep of the detectors over the sand.

As they move forward about their several jobs of detecting and removing the mines, their nerve-racking calm is clearly shown. They clear the path and the tanks and infantry move forward—another routine job is done—but for a few minutes we too have walked with danger in the dark.

If there is any criticism of this film it is that the obvious dangers are underplayed. Particular mention must be made of the way in which the sequences of the officers planning the attack have been handled. The officers, non-actors, have the usual difficulties with sync. dialogue but, for some reason or another, the scenes look real. Perhaps it is the lighting and the set combining, or maybe it was shot in a tent in North Africa.

Propaganda Value: This film will bring alive the day's news to the cinema audience. Behind those dry words, "The sappers cleared the way," is the story of *Minefield*—a story of heroism, the more heroic for being constant and routine.

Rescue Reconnaissance Shell Film Unit. *Direction:* Grahame Tharp. *Camera:* Sidney Beadle. *Recording:* Leo Wilkins. *Assist. Director:* Lionel Cole. *Produced by* Edgar Anstey. M.O.I. for Ministry of Home Security. 35 mins. Non-T.

Subject: How to locate people who may be buried under the débris of a bombed building in the most efficient way. Instructional film for Civil Defence Rescue Parties.

Treatment: The place is any street in any city. The time is about twenty minutes after a high explosive bomb has fallen. The bomb has demolished three houses. There they are in front of us, the familiar yet fantastic piles of brick and beams, rubble and dust, that only twenty minutes before were three homes, places of rooms and warmth and suppers cooking. It is significant that the film, although a straight instructional in the best sense, never loses sight of the human and

New Documentary Films

(continued)

emotional catastrophe which provides the subject of the incident.

The story is all told by means of dialogue. The Incident Officer has arrived before the film starts and has already made his preliminary enquiries. The Rescue squad arrives and the information is passed on to the leader of the party. Seven people lived in the houses but it is not yet clear how many of them were at home at the time the bomb fell. The leader becomes a detective. By cross-examining the neighbours he discovers that in one house there lived a mother and daughter, probably both at home and more than likely in their Anderson shelter where they usually went when there was an alert. In the other there lived a mother, father, two small children and grandmother. The adults were thought to have been in but nobody is very certain about the children. The only person who would probably know for certain would be the little girl buried next door, who went to the same school and usually came back with them. The questioning goes on, the stunned but rallying neighbours doing their best to give clear answers, revealing as they talk the pattern of peoples' lives, of favourite chairs in special corners, of going to bed at six because of working shifts, of children playing on the way home from school. And always in the background the pile of débris and the implicit question—are they alive or dead? Still the leader of the squad is not satisfied, a similar house must be inspected to check the lay out, more questions asked. As one of the neighbours shouts—why don't they get on with the job instead of messing about talking. Now at last they go to work. They surround the heap and from strategically chosen positions they call and tap, first for the mother and child, who being probably in the shelter, are likely to be the easier to find. First they hear the girl, yes, she's alive but very frightened, she thinks her mother is asleep beside her. Putting one man on to the job of reassuring her, they eventually get them both out. When she has recovered a little she tells them that the two children next door were not at home, they had gone to play with a friend in another street. A messenger is sent off to check this information while the squad go to work on the house next door.

The job finished, the men go into their canteen. Here they grumble and argue. They ask the leader the questions that we, the audience, have been asking. Why all the messing about, the detective stuff, why not get on with the job and clear the débris and rescue the people. They are very conscious of the suffering people and are angry at the delays. Using flash-backs, the leader explains that the preliminary examination and questioning saves time, saves lives. He meets all their points and by so doing explains the *reasons* for the *methods* we have seen used. The men are convinced in this instance, but there is a healthy feeling that they are not the sort of people to let what is a sensible procedure, develop into a meaningless routine to bolster up some pet theory from headquarters.

Propaganda Value: It would be difficult to praise this film too highly. Here is the expositional method of film making at its best and all the more powerful for being linked to a strong human story that will make its lesson last. It is to be hoped that a shorter version may be made for more general showing abroad as well as for us to see one day to remind us of what the world

war means. Not strategy or world markets or elbow room or ideologies but the foot sticking from beneath the dusty pile of bricks and the breaking voice of a terrified child.

Accident Service. Production: G.B.I. *Direction:* A. R. Dobson. *Camera:* Frank North. British Council. Length: 33 mins.

Subject: How anybody in industry who has an accident (particularly in coal-mining) receives the best possible treatment.

Treatment: The film starts with a brief diagrammatic sequence analysing the accident figures for Britain. We then see a miner who has been crushed by a fall being brought to the surface and taken to hospital. He has a fractured spine and receives immediate and expert treatment which is shown in some detail. At the hospital we see many other cases of various kinds, leg injuries, hand injuries and in particular we see a difficult open fracture reduced by modern methods. A skin graft is required and this is shown at various stages. During the operation the camera sees deep into the wound and the work of the surgeon is shown clearly and in detail. The latter part of the film is concerned with the stages of rehabilitation through which an injured worker should pass if he is to be restored to full health and working capacity in the shortest possible time.

Propaganda Value: This film appears to have two goals simultaneously in mind and consequently misses its full effect. It is firstly a general film on the value of an Accident Service which takes continuous responsibility for a patient from the time of an accident up to the time of complete restoration, and secondly and concurrently a technical medical film on a modern method of dealing with a difficult fracture of the leg. The result of this combination of purposes is that the film as a whole is too specialised (and gruesome) for some general audiences whilst it is too general for medical experts who would wish to have a more detailed exposition in the operation sequence and would probably in any case have preferred a rarer and more interesting example of modern surgery to have been chosen. It would almost seem as if the reception of the British Council's *Chest Surgery* film has so impressed its makers that they now believe that the success of any film can be guaranteed by the introduction of a sensational operation—that blood and the surgeon's knife is a sort of box office substitute for sex appeal.

The fact remains that the British Council is following a sound line of production policy in producing technical films of this type and we would only ask them to clarify their minds as to the precise function and audience scope of each.

PUDOVKIN BROADCASTS

Transcript of a Moscow transmission in English, on April 18th, 1944

Before now, Pudovkin's work has won him the Order of Lenin, a Stalin Prize and the title of Honoured Art Worker. A few days ago he was decorated, together with some 500 other people in the Soviet Film Industry, for his work in wartime: the Order of the Red Banner of Labour was conferred on him. We have asked Mikhail Mikhailov to interview him.

MIKHAILOV: Allow me first of all to congratulate you on your decoration.

PUDOVKIN: Thank you.

MIKHAILOV: Perhaps you will tell listeners just how such large numbers of people in the Soviet film industry have come to earn this fine award.

PUDOVKIN: The Government decree tells you that, I think. They have been decorated for successful work in wartime. I should like to note this point, that the country has shown its appreciation of the people involved in the cinematographic profession. It indicates, it seems to me, that the whole huge organism of the Soviet film industry is coming up to wartime requirements. It is working with the efficiency of a well-regulated factory. I think it would be true to say that they have been decorated for coping with the wartime difficulties. You will know that for our film industry too these difficulties have been very great. When the war began Ukrainian and Belorussian studios had to stop work. Several of the factories producing films were in occupied territory. The Moscow and Leningrad studios were evacuated. I dislike that word "evacuated". It would be truer to say that like many other important war industries, our industry was moved to new locations. There were difficulties, of course, but they were overcome, just as they were by the rest of Soviet war economy. The Moscow and Leningrad Studios were moved to Alma Ata,

the capital of Kazakhstan.

MIKHAILOV: That was where the last war film *The Country's Call* was filmed, wasn't it?

PUDOVKIN: Quite right. Now, just like other factories, we had to start from scratch on our new site. There was nothing even faintly resembling a studio in Alma Ata. We were given an ordinary theatre building and it took much effort and ingenuity to go on. But we had no right to suspend our work for even the shortest time. Millions of peoples were waiting for new films about the war.

MIKHAILOV: So how did you do it?

PUDOVKIN: The same way as people in other industries. We turned builders, electricians, and so on. We worked among coils of electric wire. Until we had proper studios, we used a real staircase for shooting. It was in surroundings of this kind that Eisenstein started his monumental work of *Ivan the Terrible*.

MIKHAILOV: That certainly is interesting. I suppose there are regular up-to-date studios at Alma Ata now?

PUDOVKIN: Just as there are munitions industries, so there are hundreds of other war factories there as a result of their being moved east. So the film industry now has its additional studios in Alma Ata.

MIKHAILOV: And what are you doing now?

PUDOVKIN: I am working on a film about Admiral Nachimov, the great Russian admiral. Like many other Soviet art workers I find our country's heroic past an inspiring subject.

MIKHAILOV: Have you been following British wartime film developments at all?

PUDOVKIN: Thoroughly, and with the keenest interest. I particularly like British documentaries.

(continued on page 31)

LOVE LOCKED OUT

A MYTHICAL REVIEW

by FRANK LAUNDER

AFELLOW we know with an intimate knowledge of the film business (oddly enough not a member of the peerage), has just written a book called "A Guide to the British Film Industry". This handy little volume, which the author estimates could be carried with ease in a large suit-case, should prove an invaluable work of reference for film journalists, members of parliament, civil servants, people who write letters to *The Times*, readers of trade papers and those who have to have the trade papers read to them, directors of insurance companies with masochistic tendencies, visiting American actors who are at a loss to know why they should receive twice their normal money in an industry one-tenth the size of their own, hall-porters and head-waiters at Claridges—after all it's their business as well as ours ("You're looking better this morning, sir. Got over your trouble with the N.A.T.K.E., I hope." It's little touches like that which contribute towards a spirit of comradeship so essential to the making of good pictures); in short the book should be read by all who are interested in the future welfare of the British film industry. Unfortunately, at the moment, the author cannot find a publisher with enough paper to publish his opus, so we have sought and obtained his permission to review it in advance.

He dedicates the book to the big business boys of Hollywood who have done so much towards semi-Americanising the people of this country by establishing the American film on the screens of Britain. We cannot be too grateful, he says, to those Hollywood philanthropists, who for more than twenty years, in spite of all opposition, have given us of their best, their second-best, and even their third-, fourth-, and fifth-best in great quantities for a trifling annual return of something between ten and twenty million pounds. After all, film-going is a habit in the same way that whisky-drinking is a habit, and if we send America our whisky, and they send us their films, it is a fair enough exchange. Those who suggest that we might be happier with a little more of our whisky and a little less of their films have no conception of the principles of international trade.

In his opening chapter the author quotes Sir Alexander Korda as saying that the ultimate judge of film entertainment is "the unaccountable, illogical and inexplicable taste of the public". He proceeds to prove Sir Alexander's contention by pointing out that if you are in Walton-on-the-Naze on a wet Wednesday afternoon when the two or three cinemas there are all showing third-rate American films, if you go at all your taste is undoubtedly unaccountable, illogical and inexplicable. If you retort that you are driven to see one of these films because you have nowhere else to go—then, the author declares forcibly, he has no doubt whatever that Sir Alexander knows the answer to that.

Continuing to quote Sir Alexander as stating that "the surplus inventiveness of our young craftsmen should be directed into making educational and documentary films, in which we have made such magnificent progress", the author suggests that we should take this advice

to heart. After the War, if and when the Ministry of Information closes down, and when thousands of our young craftsmen return from the forces, an unhappy situation might arise which would oblige the Government to take steps to foster British feature film production in order that these young men may find an outlet for their activities. This is an appalling prospect. Ninety per cent of the screen-time of our cinemas is the property of Hollywood. The great majority of their more expensive films would not make a profit but for the British market. Are we to have the audacity to attempt—like some band of modern pirates—to muscle in with our product, in our cinemas, on their screen-time? Certainly not. It practically amounts to a demand for expropriation. Let us therefore divert the energies of these thousands of young craftsmen into educational and documentary films (preferably sub-standard non-theatrical) so that we shall (a) not embarrass the Government, and (b) make no effort to interfere with the unfettered control of Hollywood over the British home market.

Offering a word of praise to those British producers who are anxious to employ American writers, directors and technicians in order to put British culture on the screens of the world, the author declares that if we are obstinately determined to express ourselves as a nation through the medium of the film, how much better it is to allow those who know how to express themselves in terms of America to say what they think we are thinking so that the world may have a true picture of the Britain that the Americans believe to be Britain. Film history, the author admits, is rather depressing on this point, but that should not deter us.

The author then moves on to deal with British film production as it exists to-day. He applauds the A.C.T. slogan, "Throw Away Your Trusts" because it appears to be directed primarily against Mr. Rank. This roving adventurer, he says, seeks not only to create an opening for British films in the world markets, but actually to occupy 5 per cent of the screen-time of his own cinemas with his own films. Cynics who maintain that if we must have monopolies, there may be some advantage in having a small British one alongside a large American one, because in the long run they may tend to cancel each other out, are simply indulging in wishful thinking.

Finally the author makes a slashing attack on the leaders of the British film industry, particularly the insufferable independent producers, whom he accuses of being narrow and selfish in attempting to persuade the Government to introduce legislation similar to that which the unscrupulous French, flouting the rights of Hollywood, brought in to protect their industry some years before the war. He contrasts this mean outlook with the great-hearted attitude of Hollywood, and quotes Mr. Nathan D. Golden's statement in the December issue of the *International Photographer*: "The United States Motion Picture Industry", wrote Mr. Golden, "feels unanimously that the quality standard is the only type of barrier to which American films

should be subjected in order to do business in world markets. . . ." That, the author declares, is liberality itself, hastily adding that it is carrying generosity too far. American imports unto this country between 400 and 600 films a year, and for them to offer voluntarily to reduce this number to some fifty or sixty* is a gesture without parallel in the history of Anglo-American film relations. This surely nails once and for all the lie that the big business boys of Hollywood are unwilling to decrease their profits by releasing any part of the 90 per cent of British screen-time which they control. It dismisses also the fable that Hollywood is anxious to continue to sell the United Kingdom distribution rights of its tenth-rate quickies for sums ranging between £500 and £1,000—figures with which the independent British producers complain they cannot possibly compete. In fact it is an offer so magnanimous and so sweeping that the sooner the big boys get after Mr. Golden and point out to him what he's "been and gone and done", before the British film industry grasps the offer with both hands, the better it will be for the continued prosperity of Hollywood films in Britain.

(*Tail-piece*: The author of the book has received an offer of work from a Hollywood company.)

*Sir Alexander Korda stated that about fifty quality films were produced in Hollywood in a year.

PUDOVKIN (*continued from page 30*)

Quite early in the war I saw several short British films of this kind, in which material that might almost be called newsreel, was interwoven with feature material. In them I seemed to sense an interesting and unusual style being introduced in British film productions, and the film *In Which We Serve* convinced me of it. I saw in its characters real living Englishmen; Britain at war. I saw how these people live, what they are fighting for, and why. I think the appearance of such a magnificent picture in these years of gloomy ordeal is not at all surprising. I remember seeing films which determined the Soviet film style, which also came into being at a time of great stress—in the years when our State was being born. It gratifies me the more to note these successes in British film productions, because it seems to me that before the war British films had no really distinctive style.

MIKHAILOV: The last thing I should like to ask, is this: which in your opinion are the future tasks of cinematography?

PUDOVKIN: The cinematographic art has a much more powerful effect on the people than any other. Accordingly, I was considering it during the war and immediately after it, as being particularly great. I think we need strong and bold films that will lead the people of the United Nations towards three principal lines: the first is—to bring to speedy annihilation the fascist brigand army by the concerted efforts of the nations. Justice demands that. The second is—the utter disqualification of the present fascist theories, for that will help to rid the world of slavery and make for liberty. The third is—show all that was best and more virile in the past, all that is best and most virile in the present. That will serve to prevent a recrudescence of the despicable fascist propaganda and make for lasting peace and cultural progress. Liberty, justice and culture—these are the three ideals which the Powers are called upon to serve.

MIKHAILOV: Thank you for a most interesting and informative talk.

TRAVELLER'S TALE

by ALEX SHAW

THREE was a very small scale map of the world outside the lounge on A deck, just round the corner from the Angela Thirkells and bound volumes of *Blackwood's*. It was one of those maps which clearly mark the positions of the major continents and oceans but are rather reticent about the boundaries of the Balkan countries, the district North East of Calcutta and the Polish-Russian frontier.

Interrupting fierce games of shuffleboard and Under-and-Over each news bulletin blared its way across deck chairs and trays of drinks. It silenced the footsteps of the ever walking Merchant Navy men on their way to join new ships, the small-talk of the young men bound for the oil ports of the Persian Gulf, the incessantly clicking knitting needles of the group of nurses on their way to Ceylon and the share and steel conversations of the mysterious business men. The news raised questions of where and how. Our lack of geographical knowledge was displayed in the clear Mediterranean sunshine.

How far from Messina to anywhere? What sort of road was the Road to Rome? These were the kind of questions we asked each other in the autumn of 1943. But when the announcer came to the Russian front we could all be pundits, for,

placed securely on a notice board were large scale maps of Russia with even the obscurest hamlet marked and the rivers and hills plain for all of us to look at. Ralph Parker, *The Times* Moscow correspondent, saw to it that even if we did not know much about Sicily, we should share his knowledge of Russia.

History was being made and history itself was just across the water as the coast of Africa rolled by—Benghazi, Derna and Tobruk, Bizerta and Cape Bon. But war had left them, jumping the ancient sea, and they were again small towns under a blue sky.

We talked, as travellers do, of this and that, with the restlessness that the sea gives to all conversation when everyone is anxious to get on with a job and the sea is only a tiresome interruption. We talked, among other things of films in general and of Russian reactions to Anglo-American films in particular. Some of the results were unexpected, some could have been foretold, but they helped to fill in details of a larger picture and even though trivial in themselves are therefore worth recording. A fuller report from Moscow may be forthcoming later on.

First of all, some notes on the film production background.

Russian film production at the beginning of the war had made some plans for evacuating in line with other movable industries. But the German advance found the studios at Odessa, Kiev, Moscow and Leningrad still working. They had to move and move quickly.

Alma Ata on the Turkestan border was a place where a few films were made for some of the republics. These films were mostly shorts of a localised character and the facilities for making them were correspondingly small. This became the new Russian film centre and to it were moved technicians and equipment. It must have been a hectic period. Rather as if some of the gear and people from Shepherd's Bush, Denham and Pinewood were suddenly shifted to a cinema situated a thousand or two miles away. But book and periodical publishing had more or less packed up and it was the job of radio and film to carry on the spreading of information.

One immediate task was to destroy the German strength and invulnerability build-up created by their successes. The Russians made films to destroy this idea—partisan films which often centred round the activities of three grey-bearded old peasants who always diddled the Germans in the end. The Germans were caricatured on the lines of *Shoulder Arms*, and although the films were crude they were made for the moment and did their job. In this connection one must remember that at that time there was in Russia an almost complete ignorance of the outside world. The people had no information about the Germans, for instance, by which any rumour however fantastic could be checked.

(continued on p. 33)

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CHAMBERS'S ENCYCLOPAEDIA 1882



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Documentaries do not seem to have had a very good showing (this situation may have changed by now) and when they are shown are run with sub-titles or sometimes redubbed. The newsreels of course have had a success. *Malta Convoy* being particularly timely and useful.

The Russian audience, like any other audience, want spectacle from abroad, but they also want to know about foreign domestic life. They have, as a country, been forced to a certain extent to lift the veil with which they have hitherto covered anything foreign, and there is obviously a lively and growing curiosity. *Salute John Citizen* interested its specialised audience because it was a picture of English domestic life. The book about Mr. Bunting had an enormous sale and caused widespread interest because it also satisfied this demand for information about the outside world.

The Russian film-makers themselves are increasingly aware of the necessity of pleasing their audiences as opposed to teaching them. In 1942, the Moscow conference called "Cinema and Democracies" suggested many new trends in Russian film production. Ilya Ehrenberg spoke on Chaplin, taking as his theme the line that Chaplin was an expression of the people's voice. For many years the Russian cinema has had to teach and it is reasonable to suppose that the new generation accept most of those teachings as part of their lives and now demand films which will entertain in a more direct way.

Of course it is possible to make a film which will both teach and entertain, but for many years the Russian film has often taught first and entertained afterwards.

Pudovkin, who came from Alma Ata to attend the conference, and to study English and American films, also spoke in support of the popular film. He took as his subject the "Hero in the Film" and dwelt at length on the part played by the hero in American Westerns. He suggested that this type of film structure would be very suitable for Russia, and asked his listeners to consider carefully this idea. In a country in whose films the Idea or the Group plays the rôle usually taken by the hero, this idea must have been entirely new, although perhaps *Suvurov* and *Alexander Nevski* had suggested possible developments in this direction.

But the ideal of the film as a medium of international friendship is still far off. Although both England and Russia are making films there does not seem to be any good way of getting them shown to each other. That there are two very different reasons for this we know, but the results seem to be the same. One would imagine that the Russian audiences are quite capable of making up their minds for themselves without the intervention of a committee and that we are not quite so averse to Russian films or so besotted by the star system, as Wardour Street seems to think.

A few cinemas in London, Edinburgh, Moscow and Leningrad and one or two other towns, showing a small number of films to a special sort of audience, is not enough. However useful the job they are doing may be, it is at the moment only providing material for a handful of writers to use in the weekly press. Far more people read about Russian films than ever see them. Probably the non-theatrical field could give a lead over here and certainly it would not be difficult for Russians to organise wider showing in their country.

AN EXAMINATION OF COLOUR

by RONALD NEAME

(Reprinted in abridged form from the A.C.T. Journal).

LET'S face it, colour has come to stay. There are some of us that like it and some of us that don't, but, whether we do or we don't, it's not going to make the slightest difference. Each year for the past five years the percentage of technicolor production has increased, and it's my guess that in five years' time black and white will be on the way out for good. Of course colour will be vastly different from what it is to-day. I am convinced that before long we shall be able to dispense with three negatives and when Monopack, or its equivalent, is in general use, the present technicolor camera will go the same way as the "camera booth" of the early talkies went. Mind you, there's nothing wrong with the camera, some of its features are first-class, and should be adapted at once to black and white cameras. Remote control focus, what a joy that is, and how much superior the viewfinder with its minimum of parallax. But size is against it, and although Technicolor will support it up to the hilt and maintain that it really is quite mobile, there is no doubt that it considerably slows up production and is a poor substitute for the comparatively light and up-to-date Mitchell. Soon, too, faster film will enable us to get rid of some of the oversize lighting equipment which at the moment makes colour a heavy-handed business.

Lighting for technicolor is rather like drawing with a piece of charcoal after having got used to a very fine pencil, but it is surprising how quickly you get used to working with a "key" light of 800 foot candles instead of the 100 foot candles that you have probably been working with in the past.

When even experienced technicians go on to a technicolor set for the first time they get the impression that a great mass of light is turned on to set and artists from every direction, without any apparent system, and this has led to the quite wrong impression, in some circles, that lighting for technicolor is a haphazard affair. In actual fact, lighting for colour is almost in all respects the same as lighting for black and white, with the exception of contrast.

Contrast

Contrast is one of the great problems of technicolor to-day. In black and white, if negative contrast is increased the blacks look more black and the whites look more white, shadows go heavier and highlights stronger. In colour, something else happens as well—the reds look more red, blues look more blue, pink faces look more pink—sometimes "lobster"—and before you know where you are you are faced with very glorious technicolor. As in black and white, the higher the contrast the better the definition. Hollywood has realised this and that is the reason why all colour pictures from America are extremely colourful. With them, definition and visibility are of paramount importance, they are prepared to sacrifice more subtle tones of colour for clarity of vision. In England this becomes somewhat of a problem for the lighting cameraman, producers and directors, not for the most part being technicians, want the best of both

words, they quite naturally want good definition but are determined not to put up with "red, white and hot technicolor" as served up by America, and it is very difficult to make them realise to what a large extent these two things are bound up together.

Colour Separation

Out of this arises another problem—"colour separation." This again plays a large part in deciding the quality of results. If a face is photographed up against a bright blue, no matter how flatly it is lit, it will stand well away from the background. If, on the other hand, the background is pink, only the most carefully modelled lighting will give reasonable results. Here again you can see how Hollywood technicians work! In all their big musicals (*The Girls They Left Behind* is a perfect example) sets and costumes are all designed to give the greatest possible "colour separation"; thus even the flattest flood lighting will give good bright results on the screen.

There is no doubt that seeing your first test in colour is a great thrill. Technicolor always "do you proud" on your first test—two, or at the most three, days after you shoot, it will arrive back from West Drayton, its quality good and true in every detail. I'm sure your first reaction will be—"But this is easy"—and so it is in theory, and when everything goes right. But making a test is one thing, shooting on the floor—perhaps in confined spaces—another, and there are still plenty of hurdles to get over before technicolor becomes easy. Some of these hurdles are going to remain until after the war.

Problems of Lighting

One of your first major problems will be getting enough foot candles out of a light while still having it sufficiently near full flood to cover a reasonable area of subject matter. Most of the lighting equipment in this country is getting pretty old and worn. Naturally the studios stick up for it, and claim that lighting cameramen are fussy and unreasonable people, but it is undeniably a fact that we are not getting nearly as much light from our lamps as we used to, and it has become necessary to have your 150 amp. key not more than 25 feet from your actors in order to get a good even light of 800 foot candles. This means that if your set is on the large size, you cannot light your artists from the rail, it being too far off. Therefore the best thing to do is to put your lamps on stands on the floor, or on rostrums. In black and white there is no problem here: it is only a two-minute job to bring in a Mole "Junior", but in colour the increase in lighting time is extensive; carrying a 150 amp. H.I. arc around is not a very quick business. I became convinced that Hollywood must have found a way round this problem, and sent a cable to Mole Richardson of America, asking for photometer readings from one of their 150 amp. arcs. When I received the reply I took the same readings from one of our own lamps—the result makes rather a sad story:

Readings with 150 amp. H.I. arc with Y.I. Filter, 25 ft. from Weston Meter		Home Studio	
Hollywood Studio	foot candles	foot candles	foot candles
Full flood	385	160	160
10 turns spot	610	230	230
20 "	1,410	460	460
30 "	4,220	1,360	1,360

There would appear to be two main reasons for this pitiful discrepancy. The first, "Pool" carbons, and the second that the Americans are putting 150 amps through their lamps, whereas up to now we have only been using 136 amps. I am glad to say that recent experiments with higher amperage have already proved a great success and I hope before long all studios will convert their grids in this way. In addition to the light being brighter it is also much cleaner and whiter, and this is indeed important.

It is essential when lighting for colour to make sure that your arcs are burning correctly. If the gap between the positive and negative carbons is too large, in addition to loss of light the colour of the light will change to pink instead of white, and our old pal "lobster" will crop up again.

While writing about the colour of light, it would be as well to mention another problem, the problem of "practical" lamps on sets: wall brackets, table and standard lamps, etc. The ordinary 60 watt or 100 watt bulb is far too yellow to look natural, therefore it is necessary to dip these in a blue cellulose before using them on colour sets.

So far, I have discussed only straightforward lighting, and before passing from this to night, and effect stuff, I would like to sum up by stressing the importance of getting fully exposed negatives with plenty of detail in the shadows. There is no doubt that sometimes excellent results can be obtained by breaking this rule, but generally

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A cultural Quarterly

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

appraising educational
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speaking a well-exposed negative will give the most consistent and most pleasant effect. I think it is right to say that technicolor exteriors are lovely, and not a little of this loveliness is due to good, bright daylight and its accompanying strong and healthy negative. The amount of "control" that Technicolor have to exercise in order to give you a good result on the screen is something to be marvelled at, and it is not fair to make their problems greater by giving them a negative that because of thinness, or contrast, has little or no latitude.

Effect Lighting

Now to pass on to effect lighting. This is so much a matter for the individual that I do not intend to deal with it at length. "Night Exterior" in the studio is, perhaps, the most generally used effect. I have already mentioned the necessity of dropping the Y.1 filter, which will result in a colder more realistic night light. Hollywood obtain their romantic moonlight shots with the aid of light blue gelatine filters placed over their lamps, and these in conjunction with Y.1 filters covering lamps lighting the interior of windows, etc., can be very effective indeed. As a rough guide, a key light reading of about 300 foot candles to 350 foot candles will give a good rendering of moonlight strength, but this is naturally dependent on the amount of shadow light which accompanies it.

Firelight effects, as I have already mentioned, are best obtained with the use of incandescent light, or by putting panchromatic carbons in arcs. When shooting the seance scene for *Blithe Spirit* in flickering firelight, I used a key light from the floor of about 500 foot candles, but the effective light was reduced to about 400 foot candles by the use of paraffin torches held in front of the lamp to create flicker.

Technicolor is great fun, but it is spoilt for me at the moment by one great handicap, the fact that all rushes are viewed in black and white, printed from the blue record. The result is hardly pleasant to the eye and one never enjoys seeing them, they give little or no indication as to what the colour will be like and are as often as not misleading. The short sections of colour that one *does* see (very often many days after the scenes are shot) are on and off the screen so quickly, and are so very often out of balance from the colour point of view, that they are only just worth while. These short sections are known as "pilots", and after viewing a few one begins to understand very quickly just what problems Technicolor technicians have to cope with. A "pilot" can be too red, too blue, too green or too yellow; too flat, too contrasty, too light or too dark, and at least half a dozen other things besides, small wonder that Mr. Kay Harrison is putting up a strong fight to prevent all his experts from going to the Forces; and experts they truly are.

Yes, of course, colour has its handicaps, but colour has been born, and this healthy and sometimes untruly child is growing rapidly every day. I think it is true to say that at the moment it is suited best to costume and colourful subjects, but as each new production is added to the now long Technicolor list the colours will improve and become more subtle, until one day colour won't be a child any more. It will become, just as "Sound" has, an integral part of every film, and the hackneyed phrase "Glorious Technicolor" will die a natural death in the same way as "100% All Talking, Singing and Dancing" did ten years ago.

BOOK REVIEW

Film, by Roger Manvell. A Pelican Book. 9d.

There was, if you remember, about 1929 a very good film called *The Virginian*, quite a large piece of the theme of which was how Gary Cooper's girl friend Mary Brian had come out West, determined, as the local school teacher, to reform the shooting, drinking and general masculine rough habits of the district—to make it an effeminate God-fearing woman-fearing community. A couple or so years later we had the same theme in *Cimarron* with Irene Dunne starting a chapel and Sunday school and sorrowfully reproaching Richard Dix for his association with Estelle Taylor, the loose woman of the town. This emasculation of pioneer American life has always had a snake-like fascination for film makers; and sure enough now the filmmakers are for it too: here, brethren, is dear Dr. Manvell complete with poke-bonnet, hymn book and reticule to reprove us for our wickedness and wild ways, to show us how to be good little boys and girls, emasculate our films and make the world safe for effeminacy. It's a familiar pattern: there are the "culturally privileged" classes who enthuse over such masterpieces as *Winterset* and *Citizen Kane*, and there are the "culturally under-privileged" majority who enjoy musicals and gangsters, action and sentiment. It is the self-appointed duty of the former to raise the latter to their own rarefied heights, to stop them enjoying themselves, make them "demand a more complicated satisfaction" and turn the cinema into a night school. Sure enough our old friend "creative leisure" bobs up again as lively as ever. No wonder Dr. Manvell says of *Intolerance*, in which Griffith dealt once and for all with the impertinent pretensions of such hypocrites, that it "could not be seen by a modern audience without embarrassment".

All this priggishness, of course, is common enough to-day, in film writing too, for this is an age when the middle classes, tiring after a hundred years of only robbing the masses' pockets, are instead concentrating on lecturing them on the brutishness of their pleasures. What is new, though, and very disturbing, is that this book specifically links this patronising view of life with the documentary movement, and for our own good name and reputation it is high time for us to protest. There are, I know, quite a few people in the film business, not least in documentary, who do conceive of themselves as angels of learning bringing enlightenment to the culturally under-privileged, but I can assure Dr. Manvell that that is not the viewpoint of most of us. Dr. Manvell claims to be a "student" of John Grierson, but his attention must have sadly wandered during class if that is the lesson he has brought away from it. If he wants to know what Grierson really thought of that sort of thing, I suggest he turns up the files of *World Film News* and reads his review of *Dead End*.

Dr. Manvell's book has a very full bibliography at the end and itself consists to a great extent of quotations from other writers. In spite of his statement that his interest in films began at the age of five, I suggest that his approach to films is purely literary and that he has spent more time reading about films than seeing them. To a real film-fan, going to the pictures has become a disgustingly ingrained habit (reproved alike by parents, parson and schoolteacher) long before the childish lips have learned to say "Dilys Powell". According to Dr. Manvell's potted

biography, from 1924-6 he was 15-17, an age at which real addicts are somehow getting to the pictures six times a week or more. During that period Harold Lloyd made *Girl Crazy* and *College Days*, Buster Keaton made *The Cameraman* and *College*, Chaplin made *The Gold Rush*, King Vidor made *The Big Parade*, and Raoul Walsh made *What Price Glory*, all films of a terrific impact. Yet you can search Dr. Manvell's pages in vain for any reference to these films or the effect they had on him (except that two of them are listed at the end). Again, around 1930 he would have been about 21, an eager undergraduate anxious to see any new film, good or bad. The arrival of talkies plus the results of the slump made that one of the most fertile and creative periods of American film making—the gangsters, the comedies, the new humanism, represented by *Applause*, *City Streets*, *Taxi*, *Larceny Lane*, *Manslaughter*, *Laughter*, *Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford*, *Employees' Entrance*, *Street of Chance*, *Quick Millions*, and a couple of dozen more, not one single one of which is mentioned in this book. I think Dr. Manvell has been needlessly rash in rushing in with a book of this sort on a basis of a few years' film going, the study of a number of books and a smattering of film gossip. As he plunges heavily this way and that through the film world he contrives to drop enough bricks to build a 2,000-seater super cinema, and all with the disarming air of infallibility of a pedagogue. A very few of the choicest:—*The Blue Angel*, directed by Erich von Stroheim, Jaubert continually spelled Joubert; red photographs black, *Song of Ceylon* over-exposed, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Joyce and Proust as Realists, the magnificent combination, Venus Aphrodite, and the statement that films under feature length do not need the Censor's certificate. The style of writing has all the grace

and sense of purpose of a puppydog worrying an old bowler hat, enlivened by such flashes as "distorts into dominance", "fostered into subjection" and the cryptic pronouncement "the period after the war will be a continuous public event". But nicest of all to film people will be to find an old joke resurrected and solemnly set down in print; "since light travels from screen to audience more quickly than the sound from the amplifiers, the sound precedes the image on the celluloid by some nineteen frames."

You may wonder why it is necessary to be so hard on poor Dr. Manvell, who after all no doubt means well and is doing his best; but the issue the book raises is too important to be treated lightly. This book is typical of a danger that is threatening all our future to-day, and progressive movements and the film business in particular—the tendency to take things too much for granted, to ignore the basis of heavy work on which our civilisation stands, to think that human progress can be achieved the easy way; by the casting of a vote, the election of a party to office or the passing of some benevolent piece of legislation, without the long grind, the sweat, the disillusion and disappointment, the hard work and the failure, above all the hard work, which alone can make any real progress and consolidate it. Film workers who gaily foresee for themselves a political wangle ending in a safe and easy future out of the struggle, behind the protection of bureaucratic petticoats, are as irresponsible as Dr. Manvell who thinks that a few visits to Russian and Continental films and a study of the available literature give him the right to spread himself in a book.

It must be added that the book has, in the middle, a very generous if not very well chosen ration of stills, and, at the end, an excellent chapter on starting a Film Society.

★ For your information

IN every progressive enterprise there must be leaders and those who follow behind. As artistic and technical progress in kinematography quickens to the tempo and stimulus of war, "KINEMATOGRAPH WEEKLY" is always to be found "up-with-the-leaders", its well-informed pages radiating perception and far-sighted thinking. Kinematography's leaders themselves know this for truth and turn to "K.W." week by week for information and enlightenment.

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Forecast for Film Societies

By H. Forsyth Hardy

PROSPECTS for a film society entering its sixth wartime season are not so arid as might have been expected. There have been two or three materialisations of "the last film out of France" (the term will not have currency much longer); new Russian films have been appearing regularly during the summer; and experimental work from other sources has reached a promising volume. In this article I would like to discuss the feature films which seem likely to be available.

Marcel Carné's brilliant film, *Le Jour se Leve*, is still running at Studio One as I write but ought to be available before the end of the season. Jean Gabin's performance in this film and in Duvivier's American-made *The Impostor* present an acute contrast in effectiveness and an analytic comparison of the films might be an instructive exercise for film societies. Working with Carné on *Le Jour se Leve* were Curt Courant and the late Maurice Jaubert, and the contributions of these artists should be noted by observers of the higher flights of film craftsmanship. Duvivier's *Heart of the Nation* was completed in Hollywood and has an introduction and commentary in English spoken by Charles Boyer. Its backward glance at French resistance to German aggression over a century is somewhat self-conscious and the weight of impending catastrophe seems to have depressed the spirit of director and players; but it has many felicities of observation and direction and develops for the susceptible a bitter-sweet appeal. Another

pre-war French film, waiting for presentation, is *Ramuncho*, a delightful story of life in the Basque country, which was originally shown to members of the Film Society in London.

Of the Russian story films, notable have been *The Childhood of Maxim Gorky*, the first part of the trilogy of which *My Universities* forms the third part; and *Baltic Deputy* which, though it reverts to the revolutionary period for its inspiration, is fresh and stirring. Two composite films on Russia, made in America, will have a special interest for film societies. *The Russian Story* includes excerpts from most of the best-known Russian films and while its primary purpose is to survey Russian history, it offers a fascinating opportunity of glimpsing again some of the memorable passages in the work of Pudovkin, Eisenstein, and Dovjenko, among other directors. A more ambitious film in the same style is *The Battle of Russia*, from Frank Capra's series made primarily for the information of American Servicemen. The early sequences of this brilliantly assembled and edited film lucidly survey the history, natural resources, and the people of Russia, while the remainder of the eighty-minute picture is devoted to the German attack, the Russian stands before Moscow and at Leningrad and Stalingrad, and to the first campaigns which drove the Germans eastward. Even in a notable series *The Battle of Russia* is outstanding and, on interest and merit, it ought to be given a place in film society

programmes.

The Forgotten Village has made its long-delayed appearance. It does not carry the certificate of the British Board of Film Censors but this offers no hindrance to its private exhibition by societies. The association of John Steinbeck, Herbert Kline and Alexander Hackensmid has produced a film of compelling interest. I saw, about the same time a revival of Basil Wright's *Song of Ceylon* and thought how harmoniously the two films would share a programme.

Some film societies will want to make good the inadequate circulation given to *Strange Incident* (*The Ox-Bow Incident*). William Wellman's film would make an excellent basis for an American programme. It is possible that a copy of *Winterset* may be available for revival.

Policy on revivals must take account of local conditions. As I suggested in a previous article a film society cannot fulfil its function as an advance guard by only reviving old films; but part of its function is to provide an opportunity for seeing again notable productions which have not been shown for some years. If a film society is recruiting, as it ought to be, younger members, they will want to see the films they are constantly reading about. It is certain that high up on any list of suggestions for revivals would be *Un Carnet de Bal*, *La Kermesse Herolque*, and *Mayerling*, all of which are available. In this connection *Seeds of Freedom*, an American-made adaptation of Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin*, should be noted. The vulgarity of the dubbed dialogue is unparalleled but the magnificence of the visuals is little impaired.

In a later article I hope to discuss shorts and the opportunities they offer for programmes composed on a theme.

SOHO SQUARE

Built in the reign of Charles II—the 'merry monarch'—and named after him King's Square. Residence of Charles' illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth, and therefore popularly known as Monmouth's Square. With this start it is hardly surprising that in the eighteenth century, Soho Square became London's centre of fashionable dissipation and profligacy, to which only the titled and wealthy had the privilege of admission. Of the White House, which stood at the corner of Sutton Street, Walford's "Old and New London" says "The character of this house can be inferred from the fact that it was the haunt of the then Prince of Wales, and the ruin of many a female heart dated from a visit within these walls. The premises are now in the occupation of Messrs. Crosse & Blackwells, the well-known pickle manufacturers. After this date, the Square gradually declined in the world—from fashion to philosophy, from artists to tradesmen, from shops to hospitals—until at length its lowest depth seems to have been reached."

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THE EAGLE AND THE BEETLE



A Hare being pursued by an Eagle, betook himself for refuge to the nest of a Beetle, whom he entreated to save him. The Beetle therefore interceded with the Eagle, begging him not to kill the poor suppliant and conjuring him, by mighty Jupiter not to slight his intercession and break the laws of hospitality because he was so small an animal. But the Eagle, in wrath, gave the Beetle a flap with his wing, and straightway seized upon the Hare and devoured him. When the Eagle flew away, the Beetle flew after him, to learn where his nest was, and getting into it, he rolled the Eagle's eggs out of it one by one, and broke them. The Eagle, grieved and enraged to think that any one should attempt so audacious a thing, built his nest the next time in a higher place; but there too the Beetle got at it again, and served him in the same manner as before. Upon this the Eagle, being at a loss what to do, flew up to Jupiter, his Lord and King, and placed the third brood of eggs, as a sacred deposit, in his lap, begging him to guard them for him. But the Beetle, having made a little ball of dirt, flew up with it and dropped it in Jupiter's lap; who, rising up on a sudden to shake it off, and forgetting the eggs, threw them down and they were again broken. Jupiter being informed by the Beetle that he had done this to be revenged upon the Eagle, who had not only wronged him, but had acted impiously towards Jove himself, told the Eagle, when he came to him, that the Beetle was the aggrieved party, and that he complained not without reason. But being unwilling that the race of Eagles should be diminished, he advised the Beetle to come to an accommodation with the Eagle. As the Beetle would not agree to this, Jupiter transferred the Eagle's breeding to another season, when there are no Beetles to be seen.

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LETTERS

DEAR SIR,

Your leading article, "Mr. Rank and the Educational Film" is exceedingly interesting because of the light it throws on the mentality of your leader writer. Firstly—like Goebbels—he is unable to regard the instructional film as distinct from the propaganda picture. Secondly, he believes that British teachers will use any instructional films that are handed out to them, which proves he has never tried to make an instructional film for British teachers, whose intellectual integrity is above suspicion. Thirdly, he seems to think that all British instructional film makers are so venal that they will make films at anyone's bidding to keep their jobs. Has he never heard of the Instructional Film Unit who handed in their resignations to the late Mr. Maxwell, during the slump of 1934, rather than do work which offended their sense of right?

Perhaps the willingness of film technicians to make and teachers to show any kind of government film in war-time, since they conceive it their duty to do so, has misled your writer into believing these groups will accept propaganda either from the government or from private interests in the years of peace. If he truly believes this, he owes two bodies of public spirited and independent workers an apology,

*The Studios, Lime Grove,
Shepherd's Bush, London, W.12*

MARY FIELD

2nd June, 1944.

[We are sorry to see so good a technician as Mary Field voicing the fashionable bogey-man story of those opposed to democratic enterprise on the part of the community. D.N.L. Editorial Board.]

Notes of the Month

(continued from p. 26)

launched with the government's blessing, since their object was mainly propaganda.

"But here we have a documentary film which is a pioneer venture, the first as such to be launched by a company which hitherto has concerned itself with entertainment.

"The film *Out of Chaos* has been made for Two Cities Films by Jill Craigie, in private life Mrs. Jeffrey Dell, wife of author-film director Jeffrey Dell. Everybody engaged in film-making will remember the name of Mary Field in connection with the British Instructional Films, but one might call Jill Craigie a pioneer in her choice of subject which is not only unusual, but a difficult one.

"This film is the first serious attempt in this country to be made about contemporary art and painters who are very modern, but very sensitive when one meets them. Ordinary people have quite the wrong idea about the modern painter, conjured no doubt by *La Vie de Boheme*. Actually, most of them look very much like the average Englishman. Henry Moore, who appears in the film, is quite an ordinary-looking little man—the kind one often sees on the 8.30 every morning."

Correction

In the article "Patience or Strip-Poker?" appearing in last issue of D.N.L., there is the statement that along with a number of other films *Contraband* was made by the Balcon team at Ealing.

Contraband was not made at Ealing; it was made by the Michael Powell-Emeric Pressburger combination for British National at Denham in 1940.

CARL MAYER 1894-1944

An appreciation by Paul Rotha

MOST WRITERS who work in films are already writers of books and plays, or, at the least, they are journalists. Carl Mayer never wrote a play, a book or an article. He wrote only in film terms. He was an integral product of the medium he loved and understood so well.

Through Robert Flaherty, I first met Carl Mayer, in London, in 1936, but I had respected the name since the early '20s. It had been a script credit on some of the famous German films of what has been called the Golden Period. In Berlin in 1931 I had heard his name spoken with reverence; but it was only later, when I came to know him so well, that I realised the full extent of his influence.

He was born at Graz, Austria, in 1894, one of three brothers. He wanted to be an actor, then a painter, but became a kind of story-editor at a local theatre. In Berlin in 1919 he conceived *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Of that conception I wrote in detail in *World Film News*, September, 1938. Here is his work only for the record:—

- 1919. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, directed by Robert Wiene.
- 1920. *Genuine*, directed by Robert Wiene.
- 1921. *The Hunchback and the Dancer*, directed by F. W. Murnau.
- 1921. *Shattered (Scherben)*, directed by Lupu Pick.
- 1922. *Backstairs (Hintertreppe)*, directed by Leopold Jessner.
- 1922. *Vanina*, directed by Arthur von Gerlach.
- 1923. *New Year's Eve (Sylvester)*, directed by Lupu Pick.
- 1924. *The Last Laugh*, directed by F. W. Murnau.
- 1925. *Tartuffe*, directed by F. W. Murnau.
- 1926. *Berlin*, directed by Walter Ruttmann.
- 1927. *Edge of the World*, directed by Karl Grune.
- 1927. *Sunrise*, directed by F. W. Murnau.

Caligari and *Genuine* were the only two films to use expressionist painted backgrounds. This was not Mayer's idea, but that of the designers, Warm, Reimann, Rohrig. If you look at *Caligari* today, however, you respect it not so much for its sets or its formalised acting but for its story, and the way the camera is used to present the madman's outlook on the world. For Carl Mayer saw everything through the camera. It was the flow of images, the creation of atmosphere by selected details, the expression of character by visual means, that compelled him to write films which refused to use printed titles to tell their story. With most other films, claim for this masterly technique

would be given to the director, but because of his method of script-writing, Carl Mayer must take the major credit. His scripts were written in infinite detail, with meticulous instructions to director and cameraman. He frequently presided at the shooting and always had final say in the editing. His script of *Sunrise* is circulated to this day in Hollywood as a model of structure and continuity.

In the same way that he found himself logically writing scripts without titles, so he came to suggest the moving camera. That was in *New Year's Eve*. The camera had, it is true, been put on motor-cars and trains before that, but only for novelty's sake. Reminiscing, Carl told me many times how he fought with the problem of expressing time in that film. The clock in the town square dominated the story, which told the events minute by minute in the hour preceding midnight. "Through the pages of my manuscript", he said, "the face of the clock tower moved closer and closer towards me. It had to move, to grow bigger. So the camera had to move. Guido Seeber mounted it on a perambulator. It was so obvious." The next year, he gave full vent to this new idea, and with the help of Carl Freund, *The Last Laugh* was a revolution in moving camerawork. Its showing in America lead to the ubiquitous use of the camera-dolly and the crane, now built with such elaborate mechanism.

From a story aspect, Mayer's great contribution was his choice of subject and characters. One must remember that the popular German films in 1920-1924 were the lavish spectacular pictures, imitations of the Italian *Salambo* and *Cabiria*. Successes of the day were *Anne Boleyn*, *Dubarry*, *Sunurun*, and *The Loves of Pharaoh*, some of them financed by Hugenberg as anti-allied propaganda. Set against this *kitsch*, Carl Mayer's simple, warm, human approach to the relationship of a few individuals—usually drawn from a lower middle-class environment, often concentrated on the story of a single character—was a new sociological use of cinema. *Berlin* was also his conception, but he disliked Ruttmann's soulless handling of the idea and asked for his name to be stripped from the credits. Few of these films were commercially successful if compared with the flamboyant romances, but they were the films that made Germany famous. It was to their creators that Hollywood offered big contracts. Murnau, Gliese, Lubitsch, Freund Leni, Veidt, Jannings; most of them sacrificed themselves on the Hollywood machine. To Carl Mayer, whose script of *The Last Laugh* was studied so enviously in America, Fox made a handsome offer to write *Sunrise*. He

wrote it, in his own good time; but he wrote it in Europe.

He was a careful, patient worker. He would take days over a few shots, a year or more over a script. He would wrestle and fight with his problems all day and all night. He would go long lonely walks with them. He would never deliver a script until he was wholly satisfied that the problems were solved. He would rather cancel his contract and return the money than be forced to finish a script in the wrong way. He had iron principles arising from the film medium itself, and never once departed from them. His instinct and love for film dominated his way of living. Film mattered most and he gave everything, including his health, to it.

To Paris he went with Elizabeth Bergner and Czinner in the early talkie days, and with them he worked on several films—*Der Traumende Mund* and *Ariane*. He came to England in 1932 and began a twelve year period of helping others. He took no screen credits here, except only on the film I made for *The Times* newspaper in '38 and '39, but did advisory work on *Pygmalion* and *Major Barbara* among others. His script of the East End no one would produce. His fascinating idea of translating Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* remained only an idea in script form. He gave much time to criticising scripts and cutting copies at Rotha Films and no technician can have failed to learn from him if they so wanted. To *World of Plenty* he contributed a great deal. Of the big commercial companies, only Two Cities recognised his talent and for them this last year, thanks to del Guidice, he acted as consultant. A few weeks before his death he received a letter from Dr. Siegfried Kracauer, from New York, who is writing for the Guggenheim Foundation a book on the social and political background of the great German films. Kracauer has realised the great influence of Carl Mayer; almost every German film of the Golden Period leads back to his inspiration.

Such men in this mad, money-crazy industry of ours are rare. Had he craved a fortune, his name in tall letters, Carl could have had it at a price he was not prepared to pay—liberty to write as and how he believed. He loved life with a happiness you do not find normally among film makers. He loved all films and could find something to talk about in the worst of pictures. Above all, he loved people—the people he met in cafés and trains and parks. He seldom read books and possessed but a dozen connected with subjects on which he was working. He devoured newspapers. His little money he gave away to make others happy.

They are nearly all dead—that group which made German films so famous. Of them all, Carl Mayer's name will remain longest, for from him they drew their inspiration. He belonged to films like no man before him; his body died, July 1st, 1944, from cancer; his name and work will live on.

FILM LIBRARIES

Borrowers of films are asked to apply as much in advance as possible, to give alternative booking dates, and to return the films immediately after use.

H: A hire charge is made. F: Free distribution. Sd: Sound. St: Silent.

Association of Scientific Workers, 30 Bedford Row, W.C.1. Scientific Film Committee. *Graded List of Films*. A list of scientific films from many sources, classified and graded for various types of audience. On request. Committee will give advice on programme make-up and choice of films.

Austin Film Library. 24 films of motoring interest, industrial, technical and travel. Available only from the *Educational Films Bureau*, Tring, Herts. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Australian Trade Publicity Film Library. 18 films of Australian life and scenery. Available from the *Empire Film Library*. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F. 3 sound films on 9.5 mm. available from *Pathescope*.

British Commercial Gas Association, Gas Industry House, 1 Grosvenor Place, S.W.1. Films on social subjects, domestic science, manufacture of gas. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & few St. F.

British Council Film Department, 3 Hanover Street, W.1. *Films of Britain*, 1941. Catalogue for overseas use only but provides useful synopses for 100 sound and silent documentary films.

British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1. (a) *National Film Library Loan Section* to stimulate film appreciation by making available copies of film classics. 35 mm., 16 mm. Sd. & St. H. (b) *Collection of Educational Films*. The Institute has a small collection of educational films not available from other sources. 35 mm., 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

British Instructional Films, 111 Wardour Street, W.1. Feature films; Pathé Gazettes and Pathetones; a good collection of nature films. Catalogue available. 16 mm. Sd. & H.

Canadian-Pacific Film Library. 15 films of Canadian life and scenery. Available from the *Empire Film Library*. 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Canadian Government Exhibitions and Publicity. A wide variety of films. Available from the *Empire Film Library*.

Central Council for Health Education. Catalogue of some 250 films, mostly of a specialist health nature, dealing with Diphtheria, Housing, Maternity, Child Welfare, Personal Hygiene, Prevention of Diseases, Physical Fitness, etc. Most films produced by societies affiliated to the Council, or on loan from other 16 mm. distributors (e.g. B.C.G.A.). Six films produced direct for the Council also available, including *Fear and Peter Brown*, *Carry on Children*, and *Breath of Danger*. 35 mm. and 16 mm. Sd. and St. H. and F.

Central Film Library, Imperial Institute, S.W.7. Has absorbed the *Empire Film Library* and the *G.P.O. Film Library*. Also contains all new M.O.I. non-theatrical films. Catalogues available. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Children's Committee of the National Council for British-Soviet Unity, 10 Abbey House, Victoria Street, London, S.W.1. Soviet Sound Films suitable for children. 16 mm. Sd. F. for shows during school hours. H. for other occasions.

Coal Utilisation Joint Council, General Buildings, Aldwych, London, W.C.2. Films on production of British coal and miners' welfare. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

Crookes' Laboratories, Gorst Road, Park Royal, N.W.10. *Colloids in Medicine*. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

Dartington Hall Film Unit, Totnes, South Devon. Classroom films on regional and economic geography. 16 mm. St. H.

Dominion of New Zealand Film Library, 415 Strand, W.C.2. 22 films of industry, scenery and sport. Includes several films about the Maoris. 16 mm. St. F.

Educational Films Bureau, Tring, Herts. A selection of all types of film. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Education General Services, 37 Golden Square, W.1. A wide selection of films, particularly of overseas interest. Some prints for sale. 16 mm. & St. H.

Electrical Development Association, 2 Savoy Hill, Strand, W.C.2. Four films of electrical interest. Further films of direct advertising appeal are available to members of the Association only. 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Empire Film Library. Films primarily of Empire interest, with a useful subject index. Now merged with the *Central Film Library*. 16 mm. and a few 35 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Filmhire (London) Ltd., 9 Upper Berkeley Street, W.1. Catalogue of 16 mm. Sound films. H.

Ford Film Library, Dagenham, Essex. Some 50 films of travel, engineering, scientific and comedy interest. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Gaumont-British Equipments, Film House, Wardour Street, W.1. Many films on scientific subjects, geography, hygiene, history, language, natural history, sport. Also feature films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

G.P.O. Film Library. Over 100 films, mostly centred round communications. Now merged with the *Central Film Library*. 35 mm., 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Instructional Screen Ltd., 9 Upper Berkeley Street, W.1. A series of classroom films of English history and the Empire. 16 mm. Sd. St. H. Catalogues available.

Kodak Ltd., Kingsway, W.C.2. Medical Film Library. Circulation restricted to members of medical profession. Some colour films. Some prints for outright sale. 16 mm. St. H.

March of Time, Dean House, 4 Dean Street, W.1. Selected *March of Time* items, including *Britain's R.A.F.*, *India in Crisis*, *G-Men at War*, *Inside Fascist Spain*. 16 mm. Sd. H.

Mathematical Films. Available from B. G. D. Salt, 5 Carlingford Road, Hampstead, N.W.3. Five mathematical films suitable for senior classes. 16 mm. & 9.5 mm. St. H.

Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Co., Ltd., Trafford Park, Manchester, 17. *Planned Electrification*, a film on the electrification of the winding and surface gear in a coal mine. Available for showing technical and educational groups. 16 mm. Sd. F.

Pathescope, North Circular Road, Cricklewood, N.W.2. Wide selection of silent films, including cartoons, comedies, drama, documentary, travel, sport. Also good selection of early American and German films. 9.5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Petroleum Films Bureau, 15 Hay Hill, Berkeley Square, W.1. Some 25 technical and documentary films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Religious Film Library, Church Walk, Dunstable, Beds. Films of religious and temperance appeal. Also list of supporting films from other sources, 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Scottish Central Film Library, 2 Newton Place, Charing Cross, Glasgow, C.3. A wide selection of teaching films from many sources. Contains some silent Scots films not listed elsewhere. Library available to groups in Scotland only. 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Sound-Film Services, 27 Charles Street, Cardiff. Library of selected films including Massingham's *And So to Work*, *Rome* and *Sahara* have French commentaries. 16 mm. Sd. H.

South African Railways Publicity and Travel Bureau, South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, W.C.2. 10 films of travel and general interest. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & 4 St. versions. F.

Southern Railway, General Manager's office Waterloo Station S.E.1. Seven films (one in colour) including *Building an Electric Coach*, *South Africa Fruit* (Southampton Docks to Covent Garden), and films on seaside towns. 16 mm. St. F.

Wallace Heaton, Ltd., 127 New Bond Street W.1. Three catalogues. Sound 16 mm., silent 16 mm., silent 9.5 mm. Sound catalogue contains number of American feature films, including *Thunder Over Mexico*, and some shorts. Silent 16 mm. catalogue contains first-class list of early American, German and Russian features and shorts. 9.5 catalogue has number of early German films and wide selection of early American and English slapstick comedies. 16 mm. & 9.5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Workers' Film Association, Ltd., Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W.1. Films of democratic and co-operative interest. Notes and suggestions for complete programmes. Some prints for sale. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.